

Department of Human Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, November 7, 2007

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
DHS Director	2
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	3-4
Adoption	5-7
Adult Foster Care	8
Domestic Violence	9-14
Health Care	15-19
Food Assistance	20-24
Charities	25-27
Triangle Project	28

*Important story at this spot



Seymour Hersh to Deliver Keynote Address at American Arab Chamber of Commerce 15th Annual Banquet

Two Community Leaders to be Awarded: Sir Michael Berry, Esq. and Ismael Ahmed

DEARBORN, Mich., Nov. 6 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The American Arab Chamber of Commerce will hold its fifteenth anniversary banquet with Seymour Hersh delivering the keynote address, and honoring two individuals. The audience of 1,500 will be captured by the words of Mr. Hersh.

WHO: American Arab Chamber of Commerce

The goals for which the Chamber was established in 1992 are as vital today as they were at the Chamber's founding: help Arab American businesses grow and flourish. The founders hoped to create an organization that would elevate the stature of Arab American businesses, build alliances with the larger corporations and provide products and services that help the Arab American business bottom line.

WHAT: 15th Annual Building Economic Bridges Banquet

Seymour Hersh, investigative reporter whose work appears regularly in The New Yorker, will deliver the keynote address under the theme of the banquet, "View Our World with Crystal Clarity."

Honoring:

Sir Michael Berry, Esq., a pioneer of the Arab American community, will be honored for his achievements and continuing success. Sir Berry has been dedicated to numerous civic, social, allied, and legal associations for over fifty years. He has accomplished many firsts including being the first Muslim lawyer in the United States, the first Arab American to hold a high level position in the democratic party, and the first Arab American to head the Wayne County Road Commission.

Ismael Ahmed is the Director of the Michigan Department of Human Services. Prior to, he served as the Executive Director and Co-Founder of ACCESS. Under Ismael's leadership for 36 years, ACCESS has become the largest Arab American human services organization in the country. His many accomplishments go well beyond ACCESS or the Arab American community and encompass the community as a whole.

WHEN: Thursday, November 15, 2007 - 6:00pm Reception, 7:00pm Program

WHERE: Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center, Detroit, MI 48243

Partners of the 15th Annual Building Economic Bridges Banquet are Comerica Bank and DTE Energy.

For more information on corporate table and ticket sales, please contact Ms. Susan Bazzi at the American Arab Chamber of Commerce at (313) 945-1700 or via email at sbazzi@americanarab.com.

CONTACT: Maggie Essa of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce,
+1-313-945-1700
Email: messa@americanarab.com



Muskegon Chronicle

Father pleads in drowning deaths of girls

Wednesday, November 07, 2007

FROM LOCAL REPORTS

A Muskegon Township father does not dispute he was responsible for the deaths of his daughter and her cousin, both 5, who drowned in an unused backyard pool this summer.

Chillum Oudsema, 30, of 3214 MacArthur pleaded no contest Monday to two counts of second-degree child abuse, a felony. Before the plea, 14th Circuit Judge James M. Graves Jr. committed to a sentence that will not include state prison time. Graves scheduled sentencing for Dec. 5.

A no-contest plea is not an admission of guilt, but it results in conviction, and judges treat it as a guilty plea at sentencing.

The victims -- Oudsema's daughter, Courtney Oudsema, and her cousin Serenity Meinders -- lived at the same house as Chillum Oudsema, where the drowning occurred. The girls were found in an unused pool in the back yard and may have been there for hours, authorities said. Muskegon Township police said there was more than 6 feet of murky water in the deep end.

Authorities said Oudsema had been in the basement, watching videos and sleeping at times while in charge of watching the children. He is separated from Courtney's mother, Kristina Oudsema.

Police said the mother of Serenity Meinders, Laurie Stephens, left the home at 7:30 a.m. for work while the girls were sleeping in their room. Police said Serenity's 2-year-old sister, Kaden Meinders, was awake, and Stephens took the toddler down to Chillum Oudsema, who was in his basement bedroom.

The drowned children were discovered after Stephens returned home about 1:30 p.m. Authorities said it appeared the girls had been in the pool for a couple of hours before they were found. The other adult in the house when the girls died, the homeowner, was asleep on a living room couch.

The 911 call was made about 1:45 p.m., and cardiopulmonary resuscitation was tried before the arrival of Muskegon Township firefighters, police and ambulances.

Police said that besides a stockade fence around the home, another chain link fence surrounded the pool. However, if someone exited the rear door or garage door of the home he or she could go directly to the pool.

©2007 Muskegon Chronicle

© 2007 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



Man tries to lure boy

Wednesday, November 07, 2007

ANTRIM COUNTY -- Authorities were looking for a man in a white Ford Bronco who they say tried to lure a boy into his vehicle by saying he lost a dog named Romeo. The incident occurred at 4:15 p.m Tuesday on Southeast Torch Lake Drive and Lakeview Drive. The suspect drove a late 1980s to early '90s Bronco with light blue pinstripes. He was described as being in his late 30s to early 40s and wore dark sunglasses and a red and white plaid jacket. "The suspect was very brazen in his attempt and should be considered a threat in any area where young children are present," sheriff's Deputy Kale Smith said. Anyone with information on the incident is asked to call the Sheriff's Department at 231-533-8627.

©2007 Grand Rapids Press

© 2007 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

From strangers to sisters

Identical twins separated by an adoption agency find out about each other after 35 years

November 7, 2007

BY CASSANDRA SPRATLING

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

At age 35, Elyse Schein met Paula Bernstein -- her identical twin.

Since childhood, both women have known they were adopted. But neither knew the other existed until Schein began looking for information about her birth mother.

Advertisement

Since meeting in 2004, the two women, now 39 years old, have not only gotten to know each other, they've learned they were part of a secret study of twins and triplets separated as babies.

They've documented their journey from strangers to sisters in a memoir that's also a wealth of information about twins in "Identical Strangers: A Memoir of Twins Separated and Reunited," (Random House, \$29.95).

The sisters are among 58 authors who'll be featured at the 56th Annual Jewish Book Fair that kicks off today and runs through Nov. 18. The sisters will discuss and sign copies of their book Tuesday morning at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield.

Something missing

Their reunion began on a whim.

One fall day in 2002, Schein, a New York native, enjoying the single life in Paris, was on the Internet searching for information about her birth mother. She sent an inquiry to a state adoption registry in New York.

Schein says she'd always felt that something, someone was missing in her life.

"I used to say, 'I feel like I'm missing my twin.' "

She had attributed the emptiness to the loss of her adoptive mother who died when Schein was 6.

The inquiry about her birth mother resulted in information she never expected -- she was the younger of twin daughters born to a 28-year-old single Jewish woman.

Her twin, Paula Bernstein, was enjoying life in New York, married and the mother of a baby girl.

Bernstein had no interest in finding her birth family, and didn't feel as if she were missing anyone.

So her first reaction when she got a call from an adoption agency representative telling her she had a twin sister was sheer shock.

"It was unnerving," Bernstein recalls. "I felt like my whole life had been a lie."

Both sisters wondered whether their adoptive parents knew, but quickly learned they did not.

The sisters met in a New York City café in 2004, and ended up talking throughout the day and evening, comparing notes about their likes and dislikes.

From strangers to sisters

They not only looked alike, but listening to each other was like hearing your voice come out of another person.

The similarities seemed endless.

Both were editors of their high school newspapers.

Both had studied film in college. Schein was a filmmaker and former film critic; Bernstein was a freelance writer and former film critic

"Wings of Desire," is their favorite film.

Both had experienced bouts with depression.

Both loved books.

They were amazed to discover they had the same mannerisms: a way of raising an eyebrow when making a point, animated hand gesturing, including using fingers to do the same kind of mock typing when talking.

"We even share the same religious and political beliefs," Schein says, noting that both are liberals.

The stinging study

But what surprised them most was learning that they had been part of a secret study to determine what mattered more in child development: nature or nurture. They were among five pairs of twins and a set of triplets separated and placed in different adoptive homes by the Louise Wise Services, an adoption agency. The agency's psychiatric consultant believed it was better for the children and their families to separate twins and triplets so each one got the necessary amount of attention. Researchers decided to study the separated siblings.

The study was one of the reasons the sisters wrote the book.

"We wanted to bring to light the fact that this secret study had happened and hold the people who did it responsible," Bernstein says.

The agency, however, no longer exists and the head psychiatrist who recommended the separation is dead.

Still, the sisters believe their story sheds light on an experiment that never should have happened. Today, agencies forbid the separation of multiples in most cases.

About a year after meeting, Schein moved back to New York City so she and her sister could search for their mother and learn more about the study.

Although the sisters did a lot of detective work themselves, they hired a woman who helped them find their mother, who they learned was mentally ill.

Nature -- and nurture

In the book, they alternate between telling their stories and expressing their feelings as their reunion unfolds.

It wasn't all joy and happiness.

Both sisters experienced emotional highs and lows as they began to get to know each other -- visiting each other's home and introducing each other to family and friends. Each one grew up with an adopted older brother.

There was tension because Bernstein felt Schein wanted more from the relationship than she thought she could provide.

"It was unsettling," Bernstein says. "I was at a nesting stage in my life. I was married. My second child was on the way. It was emotionally draining to work on a relationship."

Schein's sudden appearance in her life destroyed her belief that nature had little to do with who a person became.

She wrote a Redbook article in 2000 explaining why she had no desire to meet her birth family.

The sisters learned, as Schein put it, that people are born with neither an exact blue print nor a blank slate -- that both nature and nurture

From strangers to sisters

contribute to who one becomes.

Their meeting also shook their sense of self.

"You think of yourself as unique and then you see someone who could be you," Bernstein says.

"A key element of my identity was redefined," Schein says.

They were hurt upon learning of their birth mother's illness, and were hesitant about writing of their own depression.

"It was difficult because depression carries a level of shame and embarrassment," Bernstein says. "But we decided we were going to be honest. You're not a bad person because you're depressed and there are so many people who suffer from it."

The sisters live close to each other in Brooklyn, N.Y.

They spend time together: going to movies, sharing family dinners and shopping.

The bonding process took time and effort, they say.

"When we first met, we knew we were undeniably twins," Bernstein says. "But it took getting to know each other and writing the book to become truly sisters."

Contact **CASSANDRA SPRATLING** at or spratling@freepress.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071107/FEATURES01/711070407>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Kalamazoo Gazette Letters

November 7, 2007

Many young people spread joy through good deeds

It seems we read about it in the paper every day: High-school age young men and women fighting and, unfortunately, sometimes killing each other. I would like to pass on an event that brought great joy and excitement to the residents of our adult foster-care facility in Plainwell.

It was initiated by Plainwell's young men and women during their homecoming parade. The parade turned on West Bridge Street and immediately passed our adult foster care home where the senior residents were sitting on the front porch.

As usual, when the girls and boys saw the ``grandmas and grandpas," they began waving and calling out to them. Suddenly one of the boys jumped off a float followed by several other young men in football jerseys.

They ran up onto the porch and proceeded to place handfuls of candy into the laps of some very happy and gleeful senior citizens.

This is not the type of story that dominates TV or the newspapers. This is just an example of what the vast majority of high-school age future citizens, are really like in our hometowns.

Phil and Bernice Dussia
Plainwell



Babb sentencing here on domestic violence

GAYLORD — Having received a 50- to 75-year sentence in Mount Pleasant last week for the January murder of his wife estranged wife, Thomas Babb is scheduled to be sentenced here tomorrow for his plea to assault with a dangerous weapon.

The charge stems from an incident in which Babb allegedly assaulted his wife, Mary Babb, with a knife at their Mancelona Road residence Aug. 23, 2006. Babb pleaded no-contest to that charge and to status as a habitual offender Oct. 16 in 46th Circuit Court. In exchange, several other charges he faced stemming from his alleged Aug. 18, 2006 assault of Mary Babb were dismissed.

In his no-contest plea before Judge Janet Allen, Babb initially attempted to plead guilty to the assault charges. When the judge asked for his allocation of the incident, he said he could not recall the assault. Therefore, the Allen rejected the guilty plea and Babb pleaded no contest.

Last week's sentencing for second-degree murder will all but ensure the 38-year-old Babb will spend the rest of his life in prison for the Jan. 9 shooting death of Mary Babb in the parking lot of the Morning Sun newspaper in Mount Pleasant where she was employed.

At the time of the shooting Babb was free on a \$30,000 cash surety bond for the two alleged assaults in Otsego County. Babb was arrested Aug. 25, 2006 for the alleged Aug. 23 assault. He was arraigned Nov. 7, 2006 on three charges — criminal sexual conduct - third degree; assault with a dangerous weapon; and felony firearm — for the Aug. 18 incident.

According to reports from the Gaylord Michigan State Police post, Babb struck his wife with the butt of a rifle during the alleged Aug. 18 assault.

Assault with a dangerous weapon is a four-year felony. Because of his habitual offender status, Babb's sentence could be doubled.



Jury finds Berkley woman shot her husband

Of The Oakland Press

A jury found Rebecca Smith guilty Tuesday of seconddegree murder in the 2002 shooting death of her husband.

Prosecutors accused Smith, 33, of killing Michael Lee Smith around Dec. 10, 2002, at their home in Berkley. His body was found Dec. 19, 2002, in a ditch on Oakhill Road in Springfield Township, wearing only a wedding ring and a T-shirt.

Rebecca Smith initially told detectives that she had dropped her husband off at a bus station in Royal Oak so he could go to Florida to get treatment for his alcoholism. Investigators later found blood matching Michael Lee Smith's DNA between the floorboards of a closet in their former home.

Before Michael Lee Smith died, Rebecca Smith checked on his \$200,000 life insurance policy and then made a claim on it following his death.

Rebecca Smith's defense attorneys have said that there was no hard evidence linking her to the crime.

The jury deliberated for eight to nine hours. Smith was charged with open murder, so jurors were able to determine the specific degree of murder of which to convict her.

"We're very satisfied," Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Gregory Townsend said.

Rebecca Smith cried as she left the courtroom.

She will be sentenced Nov. 20 before Oakland Circuit Judge Colleen O'Brien.

Contact staff writer Ann Zaniewski at (248) 745-4628 or ann.zaniewski@oakpress.com.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.theoaklandpress.com/stories/110707/loc_20071107126.shtml

Oakland County news briefs

November 7, 2007

BERKLEY: Wife convicted in husband's death

A former Berkley woman was convicted of second-degree murder Tuesday in the 2002 fatal shooting of her husband.

Rebecca Smith, 33, crumpled into tears as the jury announced its verdict. She likely will be sentenced to 12 to 20 years when she appears before Oakland County Circuit Judge Colleen O'Brien on Nov. 20.

Jurors deliberated more than eight hours over two days before deciding Smith shot her husband, Michael Smith, in their Berkley home.

His partially nude body was found Dec. 19, 2002, in a ditch in Springfield Township. He had been shot twice.

Authorities said Rebecca Smith was tired of her husband's alcoholism and was anxious to collect on a \$200,000 life insurance policy.

During the eight-day trial, defense attorney Sanford Schulman argued that there was nothing to link his client to either the shooting or the scene where Michael Smith's body was found.

Assistant Prosecutor Gregory Townsend credited sheriff's detectives with solving the case.

"They were very dedicated. They never gave up," Townsend said.

FROM OUR READERS

Apology for abuse falls short

November 7, 2007

Unbelievable! Let me get this straight. Mayoral spokesman Matt Allen admits and apologizes publicly for battering his wife, admits publicly to resisting arrest, because he thought he was above the law, admits publicly he has a problem, and yet the plea is not guilty (" 'Clearly, I have a problem,' " Nov. 3)?

This is not justice; this is asinine, just because the vultures, i.e., lawyers, are circling to make a few bucks. Oh, and of course, his good buddy Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick is keeping him on the payroll. Would the average man get the same break? We all know that answer, don't we?

Advertisement

Dorothy Chriss

Shelby Township

Punishment doesn't fit

I have a problem with the story about Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick's spokesperson, Matt Allen. My problem is with our judicial system in regards to relaxed domestic abuse punishment. If I read correctly, the punishment for grabbing Allen's wife by the neck and bashing her into a window is up to 93 days in jail. However, the punishment for resisting arrest is up to two years in prison?

Resisting an armed, trained officer can land him in jail for a whole lot longer than by beating his unarmed, untrained wife. Go figure.

Maria Lampinen

Ferndale

A private matter?

Another City of Detroit official, Matt Allen, commits a dirty deed. This time it's physical assault. Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings says that his case will be handled like any other, but that it is unfortunate such a private matter is made public. The chief of police is redefining assault as a private matter?

Without waiting for Allen and Bully-Cummings to submit their resignations, Tania Allen and anyone else who values his or her life need to evacuate the city of Detroit immediately. Your officials have gone mad.

Cindy Merz

Ortonville

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071107/OPINION04/711070321/1072>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Kids' books fight domestic violence

Author uses her family's experience

November 7, 2007

BY MELANIE D. SCOTT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

When Katrina Carmichael speaks about domestic violence, she stresses that she is a survivor and not a victim.

As a child, Carmichael witnessed her father abuse her mother, and in May 2003, her sister, Michelle Carmichael-Walker, was killed as a result of domestic violence.

Advertisement

"A lot of people didn't know what was going on in our house," said Carmichael, 32. "I believe that my life is not shaped or defined by my circumstances, but by my actions."

After the death of her sister, Carmichael decided to speak out against domestic violence and created a series of children's books to educate people of all ages about the dangers of keeping silent.

Carmichael talked about her experiences and held a book signing Oct. 25 at the Oak Park Public Library. More than 60 people attended.

"My dad was protective and always there for us. We had a church foundation, but it was an oxymoron," Carmichael said. "Every time he drank, he beat my mom."

Her book series is called "Maya's Journey." Each book follows the life of a girl named Maya, who witnesses domestic violence in her home.

Two books are available in the series, and Carmichael is working on a third.

The first book is titled, "Daddy, Why Do You Hurt Mommy?" It talks about Maya's feelings after seeing her father hit her mother.

In the second book, "Our New Apartment," Maya comes to grips with the fact that she and her mother will not return to their home and are making a new start.

"Creating these books was a part of my healing process," Carmichael said. "It allows me to share my story."

Before the book signing, Carmichael, who lives in Detroit, and her friends and family members talked about their experiences with domestic violence. They stressed the importance of speaking publicly about the issue, as well as reaching out to those who have been affected.

"I remember being a child going to school and thinking I was the only one going through this," said Timothy Carmichael, 36, of Detroit, her brother. "I didn't tell my peers. It was hidden.

"From a male perspective, I think this should be taught in school. I think we need to teach boys, when they are young, how to treat a woman."

Over the years, Katrina Carmichael and her four siblings received counseling from Chlorine Wimberly, a clinical therapist at the Children's Center in downtown Detroit.

"Like Katrina, I am a survivor," said Wimberly, who lives in Detroit. "The first thing people say when a woman is going through this is, 'Why doesn't she leave? She must like that.' Sometimes women believe if a man doesn't beat me, he doesn't love me.

"People don't understand it's a process. A man may say, 'Baby, you don't need anyone but me.' For me, it was an isolation. He was pulling me away from my family.

"Before you start denigrating a woman, look beyond yourself and see her situation."

Wimberly, who has worked with numerous children who have witnessed domestic violence, said the effects can result in physical ailments like headaches or could cause the children's grades to drop and make them feel depressed.

"We as women and some men have to be particular about who is over our children. Children blame themselves," Wimberly said. "We need to teach it and let people know it is a demon that needs to be eradicated."

In addition to writing books, Carmichael is the founder and executive director of SADA's House, which stands for Sisters Against Domestic Abuse. She is the founder of Sister2Sister Connection, an after-school program in Highland Park for seventh- and eighth-grade students.

One of the girls in Carmichael's Sister2Sister Connection program is the illustrator for the "Maya's Journey" books. "In the program, I learned more about boys," said Marcelina Garth, 14, of Highland Park, who illustrated the books. "What we learned made me slow down and concentrate on my schoolwork."

Since Carmichael began writing the "Maya's Journey" series, her mother, Verna Jacobs, and the rest of her family have shown their support by attending her events.

"I'm proud of Trina because she was strong enough to put this together," said Verna Jacobs, 57, of Detroit. "I always wondered how my children felt about what was going on and what kinds of lives they would have when they were older."

Jacobs said her daughter's books lift her spirits. "My husband is proud of her too," she said. "It shined a light on him, and we worked through our problems and we are still together. I am proud of him, and I thank the Lord."

"This book is written in a way that all ages can relate to it," Carmichael said. "It is a book that a husband and wife can pick up and share with each other."

Contact **MELANIE D. SCOTT** at 248-351-3681 or mdscott@freepress.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071107/NEWS03/711070421/1005>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Bay City Times Letters

November 7, 2007

Child health or war

Voice: Al Laskowski, Bay City

It is estimated that over \$20 billion is missing from taxpayer money sent to Iraq to fund the war. The Bush administration doesn't have any clue where the money went. Our money is being spent to rebuild cities in Iraq, to rebuild shopping centers and make life easier for the people of Iraq. We are spending billions of dollars to help Iraq fight the insurgents and become a democratic nation.

In our own country (in case George Bush forgot the United States of America) we have millions of children who don't have health care insurance. Legislation showed up on the president's desk called the S-CHIP. It would increase the number of children covered with taxpayer money by 4 million. These children are from the poor and middle classes whose parents work but can't afford health insurance. The president vetoed the legislation, saying it will cost too much.

Let's see where the president's priorities are: Rebuild Iraq's schools and shopping centers with American taxpayer money but deny health insurance to American children. Shame, shame, shame on you George W. and the rest of the Republicans who support the president on this issue.

High court weighs same-sex benefits

Marriage amendment is basis for challenge

November 7, 2007

BY DAWSON BELL

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

LANSING -- In a case testing the limits of Michigan's marriage amendment, the state Supreme Court heard arguments Tuesday over whether the measure prohibits public agencies and schools from extending health care benefits to the same-sex partners of their employees.

Lawyers representing Attorney General Mike Cox argued that same-sex benefits were barred by the amendment because they mirrored benefits otherwise available only to married couples.

Advertisement

Lawyers representing public employers, affected employees, Gov. Jennifer Granholm, the ACLU and gay rights groups said voters' support for the amendment reflected a desire to protect the institution of marriage, but not to limit health care or other worker benefits.

The constitutional amendment -- approved by voters 59%-41% in 2004 -- defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman and prohibits government recognition of same-sex marriages "for any purpose."

The Michigan Court of Appeals sided with the attorney general in a decision issued earlier this year, reversing a trial court ruling which had found that government-provided benefits did not constitute legal recognition of a marriage-like relationship.

The lawsuit was filed by the ACLU on behalf of 21 gay and lesbian couples either eligible or potentially eligible for benefits from public employers. None of the couples has lost insurance under the appellate court ruling, said ACLU attorney Jay Kaplan, because employers have revised benefits policies in ways that allowed them to continue. That may change if the Supreme Court upholds the decision, Kaplan said.

At least 20 public employers in Michigan, mostly schools, universities and cities, provide benefits to at least 375 gay and lesbian couples under the same-sex relationship policies, according to a survey last summer by the Associated Press.

Advocates on both sides said Tuesday a decision from the Supreme Court is needed to provide clarity about what the amendment requires of public agencies. Private employers are not affected. The Supreme Court is expected to rule by early next year.

Contact **DAWSON BELL** at 313-222-6604 or dbell@freepress.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071107/NEWS06/711070356/1001>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published November 7, 2007

At a glance

- The Supreme Court will issue a ruling by July 31, 2008, on whether the state's ban on gay marriage prohibits domestic partner benefits by public employers.

Parties interested in lawsuit's outcome

Lawyers have filed 726 pages of legal briefs with the Michigan Supreme Court in the case involving whether health care insurance can be provided to the same-sex partners of university and other public-sector employees. Interested groups and individuals include:

- AFL-CIO
- American Association of University Professors w
American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan
- American Family Association of Michigan
- Attorney General Mike Cox
- Central Michigan University
- Citizens for the Protection of Marriage
- City of Ann Arbor
- City of Kalamazoo
- Eastern Michigan University
- Gov. Jennifer Granholm
- Human Rights Campaign
- LAMBDA Legal Defense and Education Fund
- Lansing Association of Human Rights
- Michigan Education Association
- Michigan Equality
- Michigan Family Forum
- Michigan Pride at Work
- Michigan Professors of Law
- Michigan State Medical Society
- Michigan State University
- Michigan Technological University
- National Pride at Work

- Northern Michigan University
- Office and Professional Employees International Union
- Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays
- Saginaw Valley State University
- Service Employees International Union Local 517M
- Triangle Foundation
- UAW
- University of Michigan
- Wayne State University
- Women Lawyers Association of Michigan

Source: Michigan Supreme Court

Justices listen to same-sex benefits lawsuit

MSU, LCC, state among those to be affected by ruling

Chris Andrews
Lansing State Journal

To MSU office assistant Gary Lindsay, access to health care benefits for his same-sex partner is a matter of fairness.

That's why he signed on to a lawsuit aimed at protecting domestic partner benefits for himself and other gay and lesbian workers at public institutions.

"To deny domestic partner benefits to a couple that's been together for over 17 years to me does not support the image the university is trying to project," said Lindsay, 54, of Holt. "I have no option to be married in order to get my partner benefits the way that others do."

The Michigan Supreme Court heard arguments Tuesday on whether public employers are barred from offering same-sex domestic partner benefits as a result of the state's ban on gay marriage.

Its ruling will affect the benefits that the state of Michigan, MSU, Lansing Community College and other public employers can provide to gay and lesbian employees.

Voters approved a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage in 2004. It states that "the union of one man and one woman in marriage shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage or similar union for any purpose."

There's no mention of domestic partner benefits, but fierce debate has continued over whether they're affected.

Attorney General Mike Cox issued an opinion concluding that the amendment prohibits them.

That triggered a lawsuit by Lindsay and 20 other individuals who receive benefits or hope to receive them. But the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled against them, setting up Tuesday's Supreme Court hearing.

Deborah LaBelle, an ACLU attorney, told the court Tuesday that supporters of the ban said during the 2004 campaign that their aim was to protect marriage, not to block domestic partner benefits.

She added that health benefits are an agreement between employees and employers, not a right from marriage.

But Eric Restuccia, Appellate Division chief for the Attorney General's Office, said domestic partner benefits provide special recognition to same-sex partnerships in a way that the constitutional amendment is designed to prevent.

Edward Benson, a retired state worker from Lansing, said that as a Christian, he doesn't believe there should be recognition of same-sex relationships.

"I do not think that tax dollars should be used to support them," he said.

The case has already had significant impact on public institutions locally.

After the Appeals Court ruling, MSU launched a pilot program for nonunionized workers, offering benefits to unmarried heterosexual couples as well as same-sex partners.

Workers represented by unions continue to be eligible for domestic partner benefits for the life of contracts.

Grant Littke, president of the MSU Gay and Lesbian Faculty and Staff Association, said the "other eligible individual" program has addressed the problem in the short term.

Lansing Community College has discontinued domestic partner benefits for nonunionized employees, although none were receiving them.

They will be available to unionized employees until contracts expire in 2010.

The state of Michigan included domestic partner benefits in contracts with unions in 2004, but they were put on hold because of the amendment and subsequent Court of Appeals ruling.

Contact Chris Andrews at 377-1054 or candrews@lsj.com.

Copyright 2007 Lansing State Journal Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service (updated August 2006)

[\[Back\]](#)

Agencies join to fight hunger

Food now easier to donate, receive

November 7, 2007

BY JOE ROSSITER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Just in time for the holidays, two local humanitarian agencies are combining their resources to fight hunger more effectively.

Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan, the region's largest emergency food provider, and the United Way for Southeastern Michigan 2-1-1, the multilingual human services hotline, announced a partnership Tuesday designed to serve the increasing number of people in need. Requests for assistance traditionally rise as the holiday season approaches.

Advertisement

When donors call 211, they will be referred to Gleaners, which will work with partners to find the one best suited to retrieve the donation

"We need to get food to hungry families right now," said Gerry Brisson, vice president of development for Gleaners. "This partnership will make it easier for anyone who has food to donate to get it to the children, seniors and families that need it."

For the second consecutive month, United Way reported a rise in requests for emergency food assistance throughout southeastern Michigan in October. Reasons cited include higher unemployment, home foreclosures, and a decrease in food donations coupled with increased demand.

"As Michigan's economy remains stagnant, we don't foresee any change in future call patterns," said Doug Plant, vice president of community services for United Way. "In fact, we're anticipating a 75% increase in 2008."

In October, Gleaners reported a dangerous food shortage, with inventory down by 1.5 million pounds from the previous year. Since then, with support from Kroger and Charter One and National City banks, as well as hundreds of individuals, the agency was able to meet demands for the month.

But Brisson stressed that continued donations of food and money remain critical.

"The more resources we bring to the table, the more effective we can be in our efforts to feed the hungry," he said.

Contact **JOE ROSSITER** at 313-222-6594.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071107/NEWS05/711070331>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published November 7, 2007



(Photo by Mike Itchue/Lansing State Journal)
Volunteer at work: Red Cross volunteer Georgia Sumeris of Lansing sorts through donated food items Thursday at the American Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center in Lansing. The center has been receiving less food than it typically does, while the demand for food continues to rise.

How you can help

- Hold a food drive and donate the food to a local food bank.
- Donate money to the Greater Lansing Food Bank. It will kick off its annual fundraising campaign at 9:45 a.m. Thursday at Hope Middle School, 2020 Park Lane, Holt, with a goal of raising \$700,000. Envelopes for donations will be in the Nov. 11 edition of the Lansing State Journal.
- Encourage local businesses with food they cannot use to donate to the American Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center or a local food bank.

Food Bank Information

- Clinton County: Capital Area Community Services, (989) 224-6702
- Eaton County: Helping Hands, 543-8737
- Ingham County: Ingham County Food Bank, 887-4357

Another food source

About Angel Food Ministries:

- What: National nonprofit, non-denominational grocery relief program run through individual churches.
- Where: Locally the program is operated through the Mason First Church of the Nazarene, which is the distribution center for nine churches in the Mason-Holt-Leslie-Lansing area.
- How it works: For \$25 people may buy a food package valued at between \$50 and \$75. The menu is different each month. Specials, mostly meat bundles, are also available for those who buy one regular package. People may sign up once or every month. There is no income requirement.

On the Web

- Information: Go to the Web site www.masonnaz.org.

More hunger - Fewer donations: Food banks say supplies down as times are tougher

Hugh Leach
Lansing State Journal

For people like Steve Mollitor of Lansing, a food bank is a godsend.

"Jobs come and go when you are working through a temporary job placement service," said Mollitor, a handyman and father of five as he picked up food from the food bank at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Lansing.

He uses the food bank when jobs are scarce, and it is difficult to make ends meet.

"I've been coming to the food bank off and on for two years," he said. "For my kids, what the food bank can provide is very important."

Yet, at a time when the need for food has reached a high point, the availability for several reasons is low.

The American Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center in Lansing desires to maintain an inventory of 1.5 million pounds of food to distribute to mid-Michigan food pantries for the needy.

Inventory down

But this quarter, the inventory is down to 1.1 million, charity officials say.

And it's happening at a time when food bank officials say demand for the service is up 20 to 50 percent, depending on location.

"For a while, all we could get was applesauce," said Sharon Miller, director of the Our Savior

Lutheran Food Bank.

"When you serve as many people as we do and all they can get is 12 cans of applesauce, it's a problem."

Miller, whose food bank is one of the area's largest, said there are a number of items that she cannot get any more.

Kathe Smith, operations supervisor for the American Red Cross Regional Food Distribution Center, said food donation from businesses have decreased because companies are savvier at reducing the amount of unsold items.

Some of those items are now sold to dollar stores or discount grocery stores that sell them at lower costs.

"It's the natural course of events for business, but it has hurt us," she said.

"There's not as much Hamburger Helper or macaroni and cheese available to us, and we haven't seen Saltine crackers in a long time. "

Retailers donate

Food banks have traditionally relied on donations from large retailers for much of their supply, said Jane Marshall, executive director of the Food Bank Council of Michigan.

"We used to get truckloads of cereal for just the cost of transportation," she said.

"Now they are finding new markets.

Marshall said the combination of decreased availability of food with the higher demand is "the perfect storm."

Mary Meirndorf, coordinator of the Ingham County Food Bank, which serves more than 20 food pantries in the county, said the demand for food is increasing.

"It's the same feel as in the 1980s with the recessions," said Meirndorf.

"Forty-seven percent of the people who come to us are working. With the increases in costs for food, gas and transportation, they just can't keep pace.

"With people who are working struggling, how about those with limited or no income?"

Pam Hussman, program director for Helping Hands in Charlotte, which provides about half of the food bank services in Eaton County, said her agency provided about 250,000 meals out of its pantry last year and expects it will top 300,000 this year.

"For a county the size of Eaton County, those statistics really scare me."

Eaton County has about 106,000 residents, according to the latest census figures.

Financial boost

Area food banks will get some financial help from the Greater Lansing Food Bank fundraising drive, which is scheduled to begin Thursday.

"The community has always been very supportive," said Greater Lansing Food Bank Director Sharon Krinock.

"But if food banks have to purchase food, it is more expensive than if they can get donated food."

Contact Hugh Leach at 377-1119 or hleach@lsj.com.

Copyright 2007 Lansing State Journal Use of this site signifies your agreement to the
Terms of Service (updated August 2006)

[\[Back\]](#)

United Way is feeling pinched

As state economy lags, donations are down

November 7, 2007

BY JOHN GALLAGHER

FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

In a sign of regional economic stress, the United Way for Southeastern Michigan said Tuesday its projections show it will fall about \$2 million short of this year's goal of \$59 million by the end of its campaign next week.

Layoffs in metro Detroit's automotive industry have reduced the number of employees who could give through payroll deduction plans, a long-term problem for United Way.

Advertisement

The \$57-million projected total contrasts sharply with levels reached in previous years. In 2001, the United Way in southeast Michigan collected \$73.4 million. Last year, it collected \$61 million. Inevitably, the lower level of donations means less money to meet social-service needs.

"You can't spend what you don't have," Michael Brennan, president and chief executive officer of United Way for Southeastern Michigan, said during a visit to the Free Press.

Although the annual fall campaign ends Nov. 15, the United Way accepts donations year-round.

To make a donation, call the United Way's call center by dialing 211, or go to www.uwsem.org and click on "Donate."

Troy Clarke, chair of this year's campaign and president of General Motors' North America operations, said the lower level of donations did not reflect a lack of generosity, but rather economic hardship.

"This really is a generous community," he said. "The industry upon which the community is built is restructuring."

Clearly, the community's needs are growing, even as the money to meet the needs is not. This year, calls to the United Way's 211 hotline have gone up 70% from last year.

Many of the calls deal with the most basic needs. Even in prosperous Oakland County, the most common reason people call the 211 hotline is for food assistance.

"We've got this growth on demand and this contraction on resources," Brennan said.

Clarke added, "We depend on each other. If not the United Way, then who?"

Contact **JOHN GALLAGHER** at 313-222-5173 or gallagher@freepress.com.

Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071107/BUSINESS06/711070413>

☐ Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

MORNING SUN

State budget woes impact Salvation Army

By JEREMY H. DICKMAN
Sun Community Editor

Michigan's budget crisis has created more problems for those in need of assistance.

With the Department of Human Services suspended from assisting residents with State Emergency Relief payments on utilities and most housing since mid-April, this has put a strain on local emergency agencies like The Salvation Army.

"Budgeted money for assistance ran low several months ago and we've been functioning on a very limited amount of income since then, nowhere near meeting the need we're seeing," said Capt. Aaron Ortman of The Salvation Army in Mt. Pleasant.

From June to September, the Mt. Pleasant office had to deny 459 households financial help because they did not have the funds necessary, Ortman said. In October, the number increased to an all-time monthly high of 128 denied.

"We know other agencies are experiencing the same budget problems because we have all had to send clients around or call out to other agencies to see who might have money at that time," Social Services Director Erin Herrington said in a press release.

The Salvation Army in Gratiot and Isabella counties receive income through a variety of sources, including state contracts that are not yet made available or confirmed to continue.

Contracts that have been approved, the press release said, are being allocated in one-month increments or have been delayed in reaching the counties.

In Isabella County, Capt. Jenny Ortman of the Mt. Pleasant office, said they are looking at delays of 15 to 30 days on some of their contracts, including the Michigan Public Service Commission, which provides utility assistance and was expected Nov. 1.

"The problem is a lot of the people have already received shut-off notices and they were expecting money the first of November, but we can't provide it," Ortman said. "We're looking at mid-to-late November for utility assistance."

Because of the lack of funds, the Mt. Pleasant branch is basically limited to offering help through their food pantry and thrift store, which are aided by donations.

"We have nothing," Ortman said.

Gratiot County is also experiencing a decline in assistance able to be given.

"At this point in the year, we have not been able to help as many people," said Capt. Allen Hanton of The Salvation Army of Gratiot County.

Comparing this year to last year, Hanton said they helped 19 more people last year.

"We would have been able to help more this year, but with the state shutting down earlier that drained a lot of our resources," Hanton said.

In housing program assistance, Hanton said the Gratiot office helped 12 people from Aug. to Oct. 1, 2006 and during that same time this year, 10 people were given help.

"With the proper funds we would have been able to double the amount of people helped," Hanton said.

For Gratiot County, Hanton said the areas affected by the budget crisis are the social services areas including energy and housing assistance programs.

"We're sorry the state is in the shape it's in, but The Salvation Army will continue to help how it can with the resources it does have," Hanton said.

Looking at the whole person, The Salvation Army assists those in need on a case-by-case basis with housing, food, medical, and with a Thrift Store in Mt. Pleasant. The Salvation Army is also a full-service church.

A major source of income for The Salvation Army is the yearly Red Kettle holiday campaign, which begins later this month, but many retailers have limited the allowed ringing days or forbidden the organization completely.

"This year we're a little worried about the Red Kettle campaign because we are in limited locations," Ortman said. "We need all we can get at Christmas to last us the entire year."

Going forward, Ortman said public donations are going to be a key.

"As we look to the future with the state pulling more and more social services, it may fall to the general public with donations and grants and such," Ortman said.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.themorningsun.com/stories/110707/loc_salvation.shtml

This is a printer friendly version of an article from **battlecreekenquirer.com**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Nov 7, 2007

GUEST COLUMNIST

Michigan State Police need more bodies, not buildings

There has been an increasing amount of publicity recently concerning the proposed new Michigan State Police (MSP) headquarters building in downtown Lansing, commonly referred to as the "Triangle Project".

As a 25-year veteran of the Michigan State Police, I take public safety very seriously. Which is why this past week, I signed on as an original co-sponsor of HB 5378, sponsored by Rep. Rick Jones, which would bar the state from spending any money on this project until the state's budget stabilization fund reaches \$1 billion for two consecutive years.

I have heard from many of my constituents and others around the state regarding their disbelief over the state committing millions of taxpayer dollars to the construction and financing of a new state police headquarters at a time when we are struggling just to maintain existing services.

Michigan is not in a position to be taking on additional debt - present or future - for projects that are not urgently necessary. While it's true that the construction of a new MSP headquarters has been discussed for many years, the decision to move forward with this project was made only recently and occurred on the watch of the current administration. As a legislator and former MSP post commander, I cannot sit by and watch as a multimillion-dollar project is initiated while at the same time we are closing MSP posts and crime labs, and not providing enough troopers for posts like Wayland to keep 24-hour patrols in that area. What does this say about our priorities? What does this say about our commitment to keeping the public safe?

While I have no doubt that most any agency would welcome a shiny, new building from which to operate, the current headquarters building in East Lansing has served the needs of the MSP since 1929. Though potentially in need of some updates, the \$1 per year lease through 2030 will likely prove hard to beat.

It is also true that this project was considered by the Joint Capital Outlay Committee and did not receive full consideration and discussion by the Legislature. However, the lease between the developer and the State of Michigan contains language which provides for cancellation of the agreement in the event funds are not appropriated for this purpose. While lease payments are not scheduled to begin until at least May 2009, we will shortly begin discussions regarding the 2008-09 budget which would include the initial lease appropriation. Therefore, given the tremendous outlay of resources necessary to bring this project to fruition, I think it only appropriate that we inform the developers now that the state no longer wishes to proceed with this project and that we will not support any appropriation for this purpose.

I believe the governor did the right thing when she targeted no-bid contracting early in her first term. Therefore, in addition to removing unnecessary spending from the 2008-09 budget, termination of this lease now will provide the opportunity to open the project to competitive bidding, consistent with the governor's executive directive 2005-3, to ensure that Michigan's many qualified developers and contractors have the opportunity to submit proposals to the state. This will ensure not only that taxpayers receive the best value for their money, but also that the many shortcomings of the current proposed location can be considered and alternative sites evaluated in the event the decision is made to move forward with relocating the MSP headquarters when the state's finances are on a more solid footing. Again, we need bodies (troopers) not a new headquarters building in Emerald City (Lansing).

Rep. Mike Nofs, R-Battle Creek, represents the 62nd District in the Michigan House of Representatives.
